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Kantian Assent in a Practical Relation

by

Matt Osborne

Under the Direction of Sebastian Rand, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2022

## ABSTRACT

Near the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the Canon of Pure Reason, Kant distinguishes knowing and believing as different species of something Kant calls “assent.” Kant says an assent that fails to epistemically warrant a knowledge claim does not qualify as believing unless it occurs in a practical relation. Despite recognizing that all the examples of believing Kant discusses in the Canon of Pure Reason fail to epistemically warrant a knowledge claim, some commentaries argue Kant’s example of believing in the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms does not occur in a practical relation. In this paper, I explain what it means for an assent to occur in a practical relation, and I support my explanation by showing how all the examples of believing Kant discusses in the Canon of Pure Reason occur in a practical relation – including Kant’s example of believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist.

INDEX WORDS: Kant, Assent, Practical relation, Belief

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2022

Kantian Assent in a Practical Relation

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August 2022

## **DEDICATION**

To Laura – for believing in me.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My utmost gratitude goes to Sebastian Rand, for patiently and persistently working with me to ensure that I clarify my thinking and am able to share by ideas with others. I am also especially grateful to Eric Wilson for our numerous conversations, which I always found to be challenging, grounding, and inspiring.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....		<b>IV</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b> .....		<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE CANON’S TERMINOLOGICAL PUZZLE</b> .....		<b>8</b>
<b>2.1 Objective Sufficiency and Subjective Sufficiency</b> .....		<b>8</b>
<b>2.2 The Canon’s Stipulation</b> .....		<b>12</b>
<b>2.3 An Apparent Exception to the Canon’s Stipulation</b> .....		<b>15</b>
<b>3 BELIEVING <i>QUA</i> THEORETICALLY INSUFFICIENT ASSENT</b> .....		<b>20</b>
<b>3.1 Must Instances of Believing Occur in a Practical Relation?</b> .....		<b>20</b>
<b>3.2 The Theoretical Insufficiency of Assent</b> .....		<b>21</b>
<b>4 THE PRACTICAL RELATION IN WHICH AN ASSENT OCCURS</b> .....		<b>24</b>
<b>4.1 A Relation between Practical Cognition and Practically Cognized Objects</b> .....		<b>24</b>
<b>4.2 Making Actual an Object as the Result of a Cognizing Subject’s Activity</b> .....		<b>26</b>
<b>5 HOW AN ASSENT OCCURS IN A PRACTICAL RELATION</b> .....		<b>28</b>
<b>5.1 The Assent Refers to a Subject’s Aim or Goal</b> .....		<b>28</b>
<b>5.2 “A Necessary Condition for Satisfying One’s Goal” is Taken to Be True</b> .....		<b>29</b>
<b>5.3 Making Actual and Realizing the Aim or Goal as the Result of an Activity</b> .....		<b>31</b>
<b>5.4 How Each of the Canon’s Examples of Believing Occurs in a Practical Relation</b>		<b>32</b>
<i>5.4.1 Pragmatic Believing, Moral Believing, and Doctrinally Believing that God Exists</i> .....		<b>32</b>

5.4.2 *Doctrinally Believing that Extraterrestrial Lifeforms Exist* ..... 34

6 CONCLUSION ..... 40

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 43

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Kant's claim about having "had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **belief**" (Bxxx)<sup>1</sup> is often understood in terms of the postulates of pure reason, i.e., Kant's argument that, even though the human cognitive framework is such that the existence of God and an immortal soul are unknowable, moral behavior requires that we postulate their existence, and the necessity of moral behavior justifies believing in the existence of objects that correspond to these transcendental and *a priori* ideas of pure reason. However, Kant does not explain the difference between knowing and believing in the *Critique of Pure Reason* until less than 40 pages remain – during his discussion in the third section of the Canon of Pure Reason, titled, "On having an opinion, knowing and believing" (A820-31/B848-59). In the third section of the Canon of Pure Reason<sup>2</sup>, Kant says knowing and believing are two different species of something he calls "taking something to be true" [*Fürwahrhalten*, literally "holding-for-true," sometimes interpreted as "assent"]. Unfortunately, the terminology Kant introduces in the Canon to explain assent and differentiate knowing and believing is unclear and seems noticeably inconsistent.

Kant defines assent as "an occurrence in our understanding that may rest on objective grounds, but that also requires subjective causes in the mind of him who judges" (A820/B848).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> English quotations of Kant are from the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant, general editors Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, 1992-. The *Critique of Pure Reason* is cited by the A/B edition pagination, and Kant's other works are cited by the volume: page found in the Akademie Ausgabe. Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin (now de Gruyter): Berlin, 1902- ).

<sup>2</sup> Hereafter, I refer to the third section of the Canon of Pure Reason only as "the Canon," whereas any mention of "the Canon of Pure Reason" will refer to the chapter as a whole.

<sup>3</sup> The distinction between "objective" and "subjective" in this context seems far from obvious, especially insofar as Kant's critical project insists there are occasions in which we ought to regard that which seems subjective as something that is objective, and vice versa. For example, Kant says the difficulty surrounding the transcendental deduction of categories of understanding consists primarily in explaining "how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity**" (A89-90/B122). Later, Kant's states the primary business of the Transcendental Dialectic is to uncover something he calls transcendental illusion, which he describes as "a **natural** and unavoidable **illusion** which rests on the subjective principles and passes them off as object" (A298/B354). While I cannot adequately defend this position within the scope of this paper, I think "objective grounds" refers to whatever can account for the "real possibility" of a cognizable object. Support for this reading comes from a footnote from the

Yet he never explains what he means by, or identifies any, objective grounds or subjective causes. Similarly, although Kant says believing is an assent that is “only subjectively sufficient [and] held to be objectively insufficient,” and that knowing is “both subjectively and objectively sufficient,” he explicitly refuses to explain what subjective and objective [in]sufficiency mean – even though his use of this terminology seems inconsistent (A822/B850). Whereas Kant says subjective sufficiency refers to the “conviction” with which something is taken to be true (A822/B850), and that all instances of conviction are “valid for everyone, merely so long as one has reason” (A820-1/B848-9), he also says an assent cannot be universally valid unless the ground for assent is objectively sufficient (A820/B848). As a result, it is hard to see how believing qualifies as conviction and is valid for everyone by virtue of being subjectively sufficient when, simultaneously, the believing subject regards her assent as objectively insufficient, i.e., as lacking a necessary condition for any assent to be universally valid.

It is not my purpose in this paper to fully adjudicate the Canon’s terminological issues or otherwise define this terminology. Rather, my only purpose in this paper is to explain the

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Preface to the 2nd Edition Critique of Pure Reason, where Kant equates “real possibility” with “objective validity,” and then says we can prove the objective validity of an otherwise logically possible concept by appealing to theoretical as well as practical “sources of cognition” (Bxxvi). Regarding the “subjective causes” of an assent, Stevenson thinks they account for the “politeness, credulity, ignorance, shortsightedness, prejudice or sheer cussedness” with someone might render assent – all of which can serve as a basis for taking something to be true, but none of which provide “any publicly recognizable justification for it” (Stevenson, “Opinion, Belief or Faith,” 77). Chignell and Pasternack both agree that wish-fulfillment and self-deception offer paradigm examples in which the private grounds of one’s judgment give the subject feeling a confidence that her grounds are nevertheless objective (Chignell, “Belief in Kant,” 331; Pasternack, “Kant on Opinion,” 47f. and “Kant’s Doctrinal Belief,” 203). Although these approaches make sense, other potential candidates for subjective causes of assent are the principles of the faculty of reason. As Kant explains in the Transcendental Dialectic, the speculative claims of pure reason posit the existence of objects that correspond to pure reason’s transcendental ideas as the result of a “transcendental illusion” whereby the subjective principles and maxims of reason “look entirely like objective principles” (A297-8/B353-4). For reasons I am not prepared to defend in this paper, Kant’s discussion in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic suggests the subjective causes of an assent refers to the systematicity of the cognition about which one renders an assent – whether that assent refers to a theoretical or a practical cognition.

<sup>3</sup> As my footnotes to the subsequent discussion about this terminology indicate, there is little consensus in the literature about how we ought to adjudicate this terminology. The force of my argument in this paper does not require a complete exposition of what this terminology means.

meaning of a single sentence from the Canon that some commentaries cite as offering important clues for how to define the Canon's terminology:

Only in a **practical relation** [*praktischer Beziehung*], however, can taking something that is theoretically insufficient to be true<sup>4</sup> be called believing. (A823/B851, hereafter referred to as "the Canon's Stipulation")

For reasons my paper explains, we may understand an assent to be "theoretically insufficient" merely insofar as one lacks grounds that epistemically warrant a knowledge claim. Accordingly, the Canon's Stipulation merely says any assent that does not amount to knowing qualifies as believing only if it occurs in something Kant calls a "practical relation."

In this paper, I explain what the practical relation is to which Kant refers in the Canon's Stipulation, and what it means for an assent to occur in a practical relation. I argue an assent occurs in a practical relation when all the following obtain:

- (a) The assenting subject has an aim [*Absicht*] or end [*Zweck*, also: "goal" or "purpose"]. In a practical relation, the purpose is either "arbitrary and contingent" and a matter of skill, or else it is "absolutely necessary" and a matter of morality (A823/B851).

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<sup>4</sup> As Sebastian Rand has pointed out to me, an alternate interpretation of "*theoretisch unzureichende Fürwahrhalten*" would have "theoretically insufficient" modify the act of "taking" of something to be true, rather than that which is taken to be true. In either interpretation, most commentaries agree the notion of "sufficiency" implicates a standard or goal in relation to which something is sufficient or insufficient, and that Kant's notion of "theoretical" sufficiency is akin to the contemporary notion of epistemic standard of justification. With that being said, the literature seems split about whether standards of "sufficiency" are satisfied by the assents themselves, or instead by the grounds and reasons one has for rendering an assent. There are occasions in which Andrew Chignell and Lawrence Pasternack seem to endorse the former account, since both of them interpret the "sufficiency" of an assent to denote a property of an assent that indicates the assent itself is valuable or desirable regarding the assenting subject's purposes or goals. Accordingly, Chignell offers an account of objective sufficiency he says would reflect the "epistemic merit" of an assent, which is to say that the assent itself has the property of allowing "us to approach our goal of having assents that are likely to be true and count, under the right conditions, as Knowledge" (Chignell, "Belief in Kant," 334f.). Similarly, Pasternack interprets the "subjective sufficiency" of belief to be a property of the assent itself, much as he thinks the assent itself achieves a goal, e.g., believing in God is supposedly necessary in order to achieving a stable moral outlook (Pasternack, "Doctrinal Belief," 205f.). But for the most part, Chignell and Pasternack adhere to an interpretation whereby the sufficiency of an assent refers to the reasons one has for rendering that assent. My reading of the Canon adheres to this latter interpretation, which is supported by the *Jäsche Logik* (see 9:66-70), and accepted by Thomas Höwing, Allen Wood, and Leslie Stevenson as well. (See Höwing, "Kant on Opinion," 203f.; Wood, "Kant's Moral Arguments," 14-7; Stevenson, "Opinion, Belief or Faith," 85f.). Accordingly, "a theoretically [in]sufficient assent" and "taking something theoretically [in]sufficient to be true" may be viewed as interchangeable ways of saying that one's grounds for taking something to be true [fail to] satisfy an epistemic standard of justification.

- (b) Something is taken to be true by the subject, and the subject regards that “something” as a condition that is sufficient for achieving her purpose. According to the Canon, such a condition is either “comparatively sufficient” or else “absolutely sufficient” for satisfying one’s goal, depending on whether “I do not know of any other conditions at all under which the end could be attained,” or else “I know with certainty that no one else can know of any other conditions that lead to the proposed end [*Zweck*],” respectively (A823-4/B851-2).
- (c) The subject is making actual and realizing her goal as the result of an activity in which she engages.

The Canon provides multiple examples of what Kant says are three distinct types of believing: pragmatic (A824-5/B852-3), doctrinal (A825-7/B853-5), and moral believing (A828-30/B856-58). Each of these species of believing is distinguished in terms of whether the subject is taking to be true a comparatively sufficient or else an absolutely sufficient condition for achieving either an aim of skill or else a moral end.<sup>5</sup>

According to the Canon’s Stipulation, each of the Canon’s examples of believing must occur in a practical relation only insofar as each example is a theoretically insufficient assent.<sup>6</sup>

So in order to substantiate my explanation of what it means for assent to occur in a practical

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<sup>5</sup> As I show, only instances of pragmatic believing involve taking to be true a comparatively sufficient condition (for satisfying an aim of skill), whereas only instances of moral believing have moral ends. Hence, both pragmatic and doctrinal believing have aims of skill, whereas both doctrinal and moral believing involve taking to be true something that the subject regards as an absolutely sufficient condition for satisfying her goal.

<sup>6</sup> Most commentaries agree the notion of theoretical sufficiency for Kant operates similarly to contemporary notions of an epistemic warrant or an epistemic standard of justification, i.e., an assent is theoretically sufficient insofar as the basis of one’s assent allows the subject to know something is true. There are different and competing views about how this standard of theoretical sufficiency is supposed to be met for Kant, and it is not my purpose to weigh in on what this standard might be, or how it is supposed to be satisfied. The Canon never identifies any grounds that are theoretically sufficient for taking something to be true, nor does the Canon provide any standard, outcome, or goal in relation to which we are supposed to gauge the theoretical sufficiency of one’s grounds for assent. And as I will explain, the Canon never explicitly says any of its examples of believing is a theoretically insufficient assent, from which it follows the Canon gives us no direct evidence for concluding any of its examples of believing must adhere to the Canon’s Stipulation. In other words, the Canon’s Stipulation says only that an instance of believing must occur in a practical *if* it is a theoretically insufficient assent – it never says instances of believing are theoretically insufficient. The only textual support for concluding each of the Canon’s examples of believing is a theoretically insufficient assent is (1) that each example of believing is an instance of either (a) not knowing that which is taken to be true or (b) taking something to be true without certainty, and (2) that an assent is theoretically insufficient if it involves not knowing or else taking something to be true without certainty. Given this textual support for concluding each of the Canon’s examples of believing is a theoretically insufficient assent, it follows that knowing something to be true and taking something to be true with certainty require rendering a theoretically sufficient assent, and this is the most direct support the Canon offers for concluding the notion of theoretical sufficiency has epistemic connotations.

relation, I provide the Canon's only textual support for concluding each of its examples of believing is a theoretically insufficient, which is to say each example must occur in a practical relation, and then show how each of the Canon's examples of believing conforms to my account of the Canon's Stipulation.

I have laid out these troublesome details about the Canon in order to set a foundation for appreciating an active debate in the literature. One reason my explanation of the Canon's Stipulation is significant concerns Allen Wood's and Leslie Stevenson's claim that the Canon's Stipulation helps clarify the terminology Kant introduces in the Canon. Drawing upon Kant's moral argument for believing in God and an afterlife, Wood and Stevenson conclude an instance of believing is "held to be objectively insufficient" and knowing is "objectively sufficient" (A822/B850) solely with respect to grounds Kant would say are "theoretically sufficient" for (i.e., epistemically warrant) making a legitimate knowledge claim. Moreover, they interpret the Canon's Stipulation to mean instances of believing are subjectively sufficient on the basis of practical considerations which, although they do not epistemically warrant assent, nevertheless provide universally valid grounds for conviction. Although it is not my purpose in this paper to evaluate whether or how the Canon's Stipulation is relevant for explaining the Canon's terminology, if we assume Wood and Stevenson are correct, there seems to be no reason for thinking their accounts would not explain how the Canon's other examples of believing are also subjectively sufficient and held to be objectively insufficient.

However, neither Wood nor Stevenson fully explain what the practical relation is to which Kant refers in the Canon's Stipulation, or what it means for an assent to occur in a practical relation. As a result, their explanations of the Canon's terminology are vulnerable to Andrew Chignell's and Lawrence Pasternack's claims that not all the Canon's examples of

believing occur in a practical relation. For reasons I will explain, both Chignell and Pasternack argue the Canon's example of doctrinally believing "there are inhabitants of at least some of the planets that we see" (A825/B853) does not occur in a practical relation, even though both admit this example of believing is a theoretically insufficient assent. If Chignell and Pasternack are correct about this example of doctrinal believing, then Wood and Stevenson would have to acknowledge the example lacks whatever practical grounds supposedly account for the subjective sufficiency of believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. As a result, it becomes doubtful whether believing is subjectively sufficient on the basis of such practical grounds in the first place. As a result, the Canon's distinction between believing and knowing, and that distinction as it operates in both the Preface and the Postulate, becomes less clear.

Using my account of the Canon's Stipulation as a guide, it becomes clear that the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in a practical relation only if we are unable to know whether it occurs in a practical relation. As I explain, no one can know whether this example of believing occurs in a practical relation, due to the fact that the relevant goal is to secure grounds that are theoretically sufficient for knowing (i.e., grounds that epistemically warrant a claim to know) something that remains unknowable until such grounds are made actual and realized by an activity.<sup>7</sup> Stated conversely: the same grounds that

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<sup>7</sup> Hence, the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms is an object that remains unknowable for us until we secure grounds that are theoretically sufficient for knowing whether they exist, and we can secure these grounds only as the result of an activity that allows us to possess them. For example, assuming an experience is sufficient to epistemically warrant our claim to know whether something is the case, the goal in this example of doctrinal believing is to secure an experience of extraterrestrial lifeforms by means of an activity that, upon making actual and realizing that experience, occurs in a practical relation. But as my paper explains, a key feature of this example is that our apparent lack of such theoretically sufficient grounds is due to our apparent inability to engage in an activity that would realize such grounds. Moreover, our apparent inability to engage in such an activity is due to the fact that the means for such an activity is likewise an object of doctrinal believing. For example, and while it is conceivable that faster-than-light interstellar travel would allow us to determine whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist elsewhere in our galaxy, the advanced technology necessary for humans to engage in interstellar travel remains an unknowable object of doctrinal believing. More specifically, such technology remains unknowable due to the fact that we are seemingly unable to engage in an activity that would bring such an advanced technology into reality, although we

epistemically warrant a claim of knowing, e.g., whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, are necessary to epistemically warrant a claim about and thereby know whether a current activity is a means for realizing those grounds. Upon securing such grounds, however, the example of doctrinal believing would cease to be an instance of believing and would instead become an instance of knowing, e.g., whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. Hence, the example of doctrinal believing *qua* “believing” occurs in a practical relation only so long as we are unable to know whether it occurs in a practical relation. At best, we can only believe the example occurs in a practical relation.

My account of the Canon’s Stipulation shows how each of the Canon’s examples of believing likewise occurs in a practical relation – including the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. Insofar as Wood and Stevenson are correct that the Canon’s Stipulation is relevant for explaining the Canon’s terminology, I show how my account of the Canon’s Stipulation highlights additional features of the Canon’s terminological puzzle that must be addressed in order to explain what it means for an assent to be objectively sufficient and/or subjectively sufficient. My paper proceeds as follows. Chapter 2 explains the terminological puzzle that mires any effort to make sense of Kant’s discussion in the Canon, and the suggested potential of the Canon’s Stipulation to help make sense of this terminology. In Chapter 3, I explain the Canon’s only textual support for concluding any of its examples of believing are theoretically insufficient assents, so as to substantiate the need for each of these examples to occur in a practical relation, pursuant to the Canon’s Stipulation. Chapter 4 provides textual support for concluding that the practical relation to which Kant refers in the Canon’s Stipulation

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can certainly imagine (i.e., doctrinally believe) that, and perhaps also how, e.g., quantum computing or artificial intelligence might allow us to bring faster-than-light travel into reality someday.

describes what Kant says is the way practical cognition relates to its cognized object, i.e., the practical relation consists in making actual and realizing an object as the result of an activity. In Chapter 5, I lay out the key features Kant says every assent exhibits when it occurs in a practical relation. I confirm that each of the Canon's examples exhibits these features, which allows us to see how each example adheres to my explanation of taking something to be true in a practical relation, including the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. I conclude by discussing how my findings interact with details in other commentaries on the Canon, as well as questions for future discussion.

## 2 THE CANON'S TERMINOLOGICAL PUZZLE

### 2.1 Objective Sufficiency and Subjective Sufficiency

The Canon says knowing and believing are two different species of assent. Although Kant defines assent as “an occurrence in our understanding that may rest on objective grounds, but that also requires subjective causes in the mind of him who judges” (A820/B848), he never identifies any objective grounds or subjective causes for taking something to be true. Nor does he explain what it means for an assent to have grounds and causes, or what the basis is upon which we may regard such grounds and causes as objective and subjective, respectively. Kant's reticence about the meaning of this terminology becomes troublesome in light of the definitions he gives for opining, believing, and knowing:

**Having an opinion** is taking something to be true with the consciousness that it is subjectively **as well as** objectively insufficient. If taking something is only subjectively sufficient and is at the same time held to be objectively insufficient, then it is called **believing**. Finally, when taking something to be true is both subjectively and objectively sufficient it is called **knowing**. Subjective sufficiency is called **conviction** (for myself), objective sufficiency, **certainty** (for everyone). (A822/B850, original emphasis)

Clearly, we cannot make sense of Kant's conception of opining, believing, and knowing without explaining what Kant means by "subjectively [in]sufficient" as well as "objectively [in]sufficient."

The *Jäsche Logik* says this terminology refers to the grounds or reasons one has for taking something to be true, in which case our ability to determine whether an assent is an instance of opining, believing, or knowing depends on whether a subject renders her assent on the basis of grounds that are subjectively and objectively either sufficient or insufficient (cf. 9:66-70). In that case, a ground for taking something to be true is a reason one has for rendering an assent, and a ground is either "sufficient" or "insufficient" according to its ability to satisfy whatever standard(s) Kant thinks justify an assent. Most scholars agree a ground for taking something to be true is objectively sufficient by virtue of exhibiting a subject-independent feature that satisfies a standard for justifiably rendering assent.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the general consensus is that such subject-independent features are attributable to a state of affairs that are not only independent of a cognizing subject but provide epistemic warrant to claim the subject's assent is correct.<sup>9</sup> By contrast, most scholars agree that a ground for taking something to be true is "subjectively" sufficient if the reason for one's assent exhibits features that are not only dependent on the cognizing subject, but moreover satisfy a standard for justifiably taking something to be true that differs from the standard which objectively sufficient grounds satisfy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Meerebote's commentary on the Canon focuses solely on trying to glean what the notion of "objectivity" means within the entirety of Kant's critical philosophy. See Ralf Meerebote, "Kant's Use of the Notions."

<sup>9</sup> See Meerebote, "Kant's Use of the Notions," 56f.; Wood, "Kant's Moral Argument," 16; Neiman, "Structure of Faith," 157; Stevenson, "Opinion, Belief or Faith," 84f.; Chignell, "Kant's Concepts of Justification," 39-44; Chignell, "Belief in Kant," 523ff.; Rauscher, "The Appendix to the Dialectic," 306f.; Pasternack, "Kant's Doctrinal Belief," 201f.; Pasternack, "Development and Scope," 292f.; Pasternack, "Kant on Knowledge," 57f.; Pasternack, "Kant on Opinion," 43f.

<sup>10</sup> As I discuss in greater detail, both Wood and Stevenson think practical considerations can provide subjectively sufficient grounds for rendering assent (See Wood, "Kant's Moral Argument," 19f.; Stevenson, "Opinion, Belief or Faith," 84f.). By contrast, Frederick Rauscher argues an assent is subjectively sufficient merely insofar as an assent "stems from or is in accord with shared faculties of the mind" (See "The Appendix to the Dialectic," 307f.).

On this preliminary account so far, instances of believing and knowing differ from one another because the former lack subject-independent grounds for rendering assent. But insofar as the same can be said for instances of opining, the dispositive feature of believing are grounds Kant regards as subjectively sufficient, which he says accounts for the “conviction” with which something is taken to be true (A822/B850). But the Canon never explains what any of this terminology means, or what standards of justification must be satisfied in order to determine whether an assent is objectively and/or subjectively sufficient. Worse still, Kant’s sustained discussion about conviction seems to complicate any attempt to render a coherent explanation of what it means for an assent to be objectively [in]sufficient and subjectively [in]sufficient:

If [taking something to be true] is valid for everyone merely so long as one has reason, then its ground is objectively sufficient, and in that case taking something to be true is called **conviction**. (A820/B848)

At this point, Kant is merely telling us that an objectively sufficient ground for assent is a necessary condition for an assent to be valid for everyone, and that no assent is valid for everyone unless it qualifies as an instance of conviction.

However, Kant goes on to make an important distinction between conviction and another type of assent he calls persuasion, the latter of which occurs whenever “the ground of the judgment” that is taken to be true “lies solely in the subject [but] is held to be objective” (A820/B848).<sup>11</sup> According to Kant, “persuasion cannot be distinguished from conviction

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Chignell says there is a need to differentiate two types of subjective sufficiency, each of which is exclusive to knowing and believing, respectively. Whereas the former corresponds to a subject’s ability to recognize her grounds for assent are objectively sufficient, the latter denotes the manner in which an assent satisfies the needs or interests of a subject, albeit without indicating that the subject’s proposition is true (see “Kant’s Concepts of Justification,” 44ff, 5ff.; and “Belief in Kant,” 333ff.). By contrast, Pasternack thinks the subjective sufficiency of an assent is attributable to the internal processes whereby a subject comes to firmly commit to her assent, and these internal processes can result from the presence of objective grounds as well as non-epistemic considerations pertaining to a subject’s personal goals (See “Kant’s Doctrinal Belief,” 202ff.; “Development and Scope,” 293ff.).

<sup>11</sup> Commentaries differ about what the subjective grounds are that instances of persuasion mistake for objective grounds. Stevenson thinks these subjective causes have to do with “politeness, credulity, ignorance, shortsightedness, prejudice or sheer cussedness,” all of which can serve as a basis for taking something to be true,

subjectively” (A821/B849), and the only “touchstone of whether taking something to be true is conviction or mere persuasion is [...] the possibility of communicating it and finding it to be valid for the reason of every human being to take it to be true” (A820/B848). This “touchstone” for differentiating conviction from persuasion makes sense only if instances of conviction are always supposed to be valid for everyone. And since an objectively sufficient ground is a necessary condition for an assent to be valid for everyone, it follows that all instances of conviction are supposed to have an objectively sufficient ground for assent as well. However, when we compare these features of conviction with Kant’s portrayals of believing and knowing, an obvious interpretative challenge emerges.

After telling us any instance of believing is “only subjectively sufficient and at the same time it is held to be objectively insufficient,” and that any instance of knowing is “both subjectively and objectively sufficient,” Kant immediately says “[subjective] sufficiency is called **conviction** (for myself), objective sufficiency, **certainty** (for everyone)” (A822/B850). Given Kant’s earlier portrayal of conviction, his definitions of knowing and believing suggest only knowing can be valid for everyone and qualify as conviction, since only instances of knowing have the objectively sufficient ground that is necessary for an assent to qualify as conviction. However, Kant clearly says the subjective sufficiency of an assent indicates whether an assent qualifies as conviction, which means believing and knowing are supposed to be valid for everyone. And yet, a necessary condition for an assent to be valid for everyone is that the ground

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but none of which provide “any publicly recognizable justification for it” (See “Opinion, Belief or Faith,” 77). Chignell and Pasternack both agree that wish-fulfillment and self-deception offer paradigm examples in which the private grounds of one’s judgment give the subject feeling a confidence that her grounds are nevertheless objective (See Chignell, “Kant’s Concepts of Justification,” 47f. and “Belief in Kant,” 331; Pasternack, “Kant’s Doctrinal Belief,” 203f.).

of the assent is objectively sufficient – and Kant says all instances of believing are “held to be objectively insufficient” (A822/B850).<sup>12</sup>

## 2.2 The Canon’s Stipulation

Kant’s portrayals of conviction and believing suggest instances of believing are supposed to be valid for everyone, even though crucial features of both conviction and believing seem at odds with that conclusion. Kant says an assent can be valid for everyone only if the ground of one’s assent is objectively sufficient, and that instances of believing are supposedly objectively insufficient, but then says instances of believing nevertheless qualify as conviction solely on the basis of being subjectively sufficient, and therefore ought to be regarded as valid for everyone accordingly. Although my paper does not venture to reconcile this terminological confusion, my purpose here is to explain a single sentence that some commentaries suggest can help reconcile these seemingly contradictory positions surrounding the Canon’s terminology:

Only in a **practical relation** [...] can taking something that is theoretically insufficient to be true be called believing. (A823/B851)

In their respective analyses of the Canon’s terminology, both Allen Wood and Leslie Stevenson refer to the Canon’s Stipulation after having already indicated that their primary interest with the

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<sup>12</sup> Both Chignell and Pasternack think we can reconcile the apparent inconsistency of Kant’s portrayals of conviction if we refer to *Jäsche Logik*’s distinction between “logical” and “practical” conviction (9:72), so that knowing is an instance of the former, which corresponds to objectively sufficient grounds, and believing an instance of the latter, and corresponds to subjectively sufficient grounds (See Chignell “Kant’s Concepts of Justification,” 59n4; Pasternack, “Kant’s Doctrinal Belief in God,” 202n9). While I think the distinction between logical and practical conviction is sound, for reasons I cannot satisfactorily defend in this paper, I do not agree with the implication that the objectively sufficient grounds which epistemically warrant a claim to knowledge are alone sufficient to produce logical conviction (see Chignell’s argument to this effect in “Kant’s Concepts of Justification,” 36f., and “Belief in Kant,” 331f.). Insofar as the latter position requires that the features of logical conviction cannot be located in instances of believing, it does not seem implausible that one and the same features are supposed to account for the conviction (i.e., the “subjective sufficiency”) with which one knows or believes, and that these features correspond to an objectively sufficient ground that does not epistemically warrant a knowledge claim. If this is indeed what Kant has in mind in the Canon, then it might explain his confusing portrayals of conviction as having an objectively sufficient ground as well as its accounting for the subjective sufficiency with which something is taken to be true.

Canon is Kant's claim regarding the moral faith in the existence of God and an immortal soul.<sup>13</sup> Wood's and Stevenson's interest in this example of believing is understandable, since it is clearly Kant's focus when he famously says, "I had to deny **knowledge** in order to make room for **belief**" (Bxxx). According to Kant, the possibility of knowing whether God and an immortal soul exist must be disproven in order for these transcendental and *a priori* ideas of pure reason to have any practical (as opposed to theoretical) application. More specifically, Kant thinks moral behavior requires one to assent to the existence of God and an afterlife (Bxxx), i.e., moral behavior requires believing in the existence of God and an immortal soul (see A811/B839; 5:132-46). Given their primary interest in Kant's moral argument for believing in the existence of God and an immortal soul, it is easy to see why Wood and Stevenson think the Canon's Stipulation is relevant for situating this example of believing within the Canon's terminological framework of objective and subjective [in]sufficiency.

Just as Kant argues we cannot know but must nevertheless believe God and an immortal soul exist, Wood and Stevenson think the Canon's Stipulation captures this distinction between knowing and believing when Kant describes believing as a "theoretically insufficient assent" (A823/B851). More specifically, Wood and Stevenson understand Kant as saying instances of believing lack the sort of grounds that are "theoretically (or epistemically) sufficient" to warrant a knowledge claim, and conclude Kant's portrayals of believing as "held to be objectively insufficient" and knowing as "objectively sufficient" refer to such theoretically sufficient

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<sup>13</sup> Wood prefaces his discussion of the Canon by discussing the frequency with which Kant's moral arguments for the existence of God, freedom, and immortality recur throughout Kant's critical writings, and explaining that his own interest with this argument is to clarify why Kant argues for the necessity of positing the existence of God and an immortal soul in order to engage in moral behavior (See Wood, "Kant's Moral Arguments, 10ff.). Likewise, although Stevenson recognizes that Kant's discussion in the Canon is philosophically significant in its own right, Stevenson is clear his analysis is also interested the Canon as "a necessary background for assessing [Kant's] accounts of religious faith" (Stevenson, "Opinion, Believing or Faith," 72).

grounds (A822/B850).<sup>14</sup> Likewise, Wood and Stevenson interpret the practical relation in which believing occurs as reflecting Kant's claim that a theoretically insufficient assent can be justified on the basis of practical considerations, just as believing God and an afterlife exist is allegedly necessary for engaging in moral behavior.<sup>15</sup> Toward this end, Wood and Stevenson argue that the sufficiency of belief is "subjective" in the sense that the grounds for believing "ultimately depend on personal commitment" to engage in a given behavior,<sup>16</sup> and are therefore "a personal and 'subjective' matter."<sup>17</sup> And just as Kant thinks moral law is binding for all rational subjects, Wood and Stevenson conclude subjective grounds for assent can be valid for everyone<sup>18</sup> and therefore justify conviction.

Wood and Stevenson draw upon the Canon's Stipulation to support their claim that instances of believing are held to be objectively insufficient insofar as the basis of one's believing is not theoretically sufficient for (i.e., does not epistemically warrant) legitimate claims to know. Moreover, Wood and Stevenson conclude that instances of believing qualify as

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<sup>14</sup> According to Wood, an assent is thereby objectively sufficient if "the grounds for holding that judgment consist in knowledge of, evidence concerning, or reasoning about the *object* (or objects) with which the judgments deal" ("Kant's Moral Arguments, 16). Likewise, Stevenson says "*Wissen* must be based either on logical proof (deduction) or such strong empirical evidence (induction) as to amount to knowledge beyond all reasonable doubt" ("Opinion, Belief or Faith," 85).

<sup>15</sup> Hence, Wood concludes "...on the basis of practical considerations holding for each man personally as a moral agent, Kant proposes to justify and even rationally to require of each man the personal conviction that there exist a God and future life" ("Kant's Moral Arguments," 17). According to Stevenson, "the grounds of *glauben*, although universal, are not 'objective' in the sense of being about the object(s) that the judgments refer to, but subjective in the sense that people's responses to them ultimately depend on personal commitment" ("Opinion, Belief or Faith," 85).

<sup>16</sup> Stevenson, "Opinion, Believing or Faith," 85.

<sup>17</sup> Wood, "Kant's Moral Argument," 16.

<sup>18</sup> In agreement with Wood, Stevenson says, "Kant holds that both *wissen* and *glauben* are based on grounds that are *universally* valid – that is reasons that appeal to the judgment of any rational person" ("Opinion, Belief or Faith," 85). However, Stevenson does not address whether the universal validity of believing means it is also somehow objectively sufficient. Wood argues the Canon's Stipulation confirms the presence of two distinct meanings of objectively sufficient in the Canon – one corresponding to the way only instances of knowing are theoretically sufficient, and another that merely reflects the fact that an assent is valid for everyone (See "Kant's Moral Arguments," 15-6). Chignell also argues Kant's discussion in the Canon requires two distinct notions of "objectively," i.e., a narrow concept that refers to epistemic warrants, and a broad conception of object that merely reflects the intersubjective communicability of an assent (see "Kant's Concept of Justification," 42; "Belief in Kant," 336f.)

conviction and are valid for everyone by virtue of subjectively sufficient practical considerations for which a believing subject renders her assent.

In the Canon, Kant provides examples for what he says are three different types of believing: pragmatic (A824-5/B852-3), doctrinal (A825-7/B853-5), and moral believing (A828-30/B856-58). If Wood and Stevenson are correct about the relevance of the Canon's Stipulation for explaining the Canon's terminology, there is little reason to doubt that their account of this terminology explains how the Canon's other examples of believing are also subjectively sufficient and held to be objectively insufficient. Presumably, each of the Canon's examples of believing involves taking something to be true on the basis of grounds that are theoretically insufficient for knowing, but which are nevertheless subjectively sufficient for everyone on the basis of practical considerations.

### **2.3 An Apparent Exception to the Canon's Stipulation**

My purpose in this paper is not to evaluate Wood's and Stevenson's respective explanations of the Canon's pivotal terminology. Nor do I intend to evaluate whether the Canon's Stipulation provides the degree of insight Wood and Stevenson think it gives us about how to explain the Canon's terminology. My only purpose in this paper is to explain what Kant says in the Canon's Stipulation, i.e., to explain what the practical relation [*praktischer Beziehung*] is to which the Canon's Stipulation refers, as well as what Kant means by saying an assent occurs in practical relation. Neither Wood nor Stevenson fully explains what the practical relation is to which Kant refers in the Canon's Stipulation, or what it means for an assent to occur in a practical relation. As a result, Wood's and Stevenson's respective explanations of the Canon's terminology are vulnerable to Andrew Chignell's and Lawrence Pasternack's claims that at least one of the Canon's examples of believing does not occur in a practical relation. If

Chignell and Pasternack are correct, it follows that Wood and Stevenson would be forced to acknowledge such an example lacks whatever practical grounds are supposedly necessary to render that instance of believing subjectively sufficient. And in that case, we would have reason to doubt whether instances of believing are subjectively sufficient on the basis of such practical grounds in the first place.

Although my paper does not venture to weigh in on what it means for believing to be subjectively sufficient, my explanation of the Canon's Stipulation shows how each of the Canon's examples of believing occurs in a practical relation – including Kant's example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. I show that the practical relation Kant mentions in the Canon's Stipulation refers to the way practical cognition is supposed to relate to its cognized object, i.e., by making actual and realizing that object as the result of an activity in which the cognizing subject engages. And as each of the Canon's examples of believing confirms, an assent occurs in a practical relation merely insofar as a subject is taking to be true "something" she regards as a sufficient condition for satisfying or achieving a purpose or goal she has – all while making actual and realizing that purpose or goal as the result of an activity in which the subject engages.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> At this preliminary stage of explaining what it means for an assent to occur in a practical relation, it can be helpful to clarify the distinction between (1) that which the subject regards (on grounds that are supposedly theoretically insufficient) as a sufficient condition for satisfying goal, and (2) the activity in which a subject engages in order to make actual and realize that goal. As my paper explains: in each of the Canon's examples of believing (except the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist), the activity that makes actual and realizes the subject's goal differs from that which the subject regards as a sufficient condition for satisfying her goal. The importance of this distinction is most clear in the Canon's examples of doctrinally believing that God exists and morally believing that God exists. In both these examples, the existence of an object corresponding to God is taken to be a sufficient condition for satisfying a goal that the believing subject has: the existence of God justifies my supposition that nature is purposive (which is supposedly necessary to investigate nature), and the existence of God justifies the rationality of my hope that the Highest Good is realizable. But for reasons central to Kant's critical philosophy, no object corresponding to the idea of God could ever be actual or real. Hence, the mere positing of a condition that is supposedly sufficient for satisfying my goal is not *itself* sufficient to make actual and realize that goal – assuming the actualization of that goal is contingent on the actualization of something that the subject regards as a sufficient condition for satisfying that goal. These considerations raise questions as to why (except in the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist) the subject bothers herself with taking to be true

In the Canon, Kant insists “it is not merely an opinion but a strong belief (on the correctness of which I would wager many advantages in life) that there are also inhabitants of other worlds” (A825/B853). And although Chignell and Pasternack acknowledge the assent in this case is theoretically insufficient,<sup>20</sup> (from which it follows that this example of believing occurs in a practical relation), since Kant claims this example of doctrinal believing is appropriate only in situations where “we might not be able to undertake anything in relation [*in Beziehung*] to the object, and taking something to be true is merely theoretical” (A825/B853), Chignell and Pasternack conclude the example is ultimately an exception to the Canon’s Stipulation and does not occur in a practical relation. According to Pasternack, we should take Kant’s description of this example to mean that doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist differs from the Canon’s other examples of believing in that the former is typified by its apparent failure to be the goal of any action.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, Chignell reads this feature in Kant’s portrayal of doctrinal believing to mean there is nothing we can do that would result in furnishing theoretically sufficient grounds for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist.<sup>22</sup>

The rest of my paper develops an explanation of the Canon’s Stipulation that casts doubt on Chignell’s and Pasternack’s assertion that this example of doctrinal believing does not occur

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“a sufficient condition” that differs from the activity that seems to be responsible for making actual and realizing her goal. On this topic, I agree with Wood’s argument that “[the] importance of the relation between belief and action for Kant is [...] that a finite rational being acting purposively in a situation always ‘presupposes,’ ‘implies,’ or ‘commits himself to’ certain beliefs about his situation which form the ‘ground for the employment of means’ to the end which he has set himself” (Wood, “Kant’s Moral Arguments,” 20). Hence, while the realization of a subject’s goal is due to her deliberate activity, that which the subject regards as a sufficient condition for satisfying her goal allows her to explain why it is rational to pursue that goal, given the state of affairs in which she understands herself to be operating.

<sup>20</sup> Referring to doctrinal believing as “theoretical belief,” Chignell says this species of believing “involves a subject firmly assenting to a proposition for which he or she has insufficient objective grounds,” and that the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms is something that could not “be known on the basis of empirical observation or theorizing” (“Belief in Kant,” 345). And according to Pasternack, the reason Kant believes the proposition “extraterrestrial lifeforms exist” is true is due to the “absence of existing ‘means for arriving at certainty about the matter’ (A825/B853),” (Kant’s Doctrinal Belief,” (208).

<sup>21</sup> Pasternack, “Doctrinal Belief in God,” 208n17f.

<sup>22</sup> Chignell, “Belief in Kant,” 345f.

in a practical relation. On the one hand, Pasternack and Chignell are correct that a key point Kant is making in this example of doctrinal believing is that our ability to have theoretically sufficient grounds for knowing requires that we engage in activities that secure those grounds. For example, most people would probably have to engage in a few activities in order to know the name of the person who works as the general manager at the oldest restaurant in Atlanta: not only would we have to engage in the activity of research in order to determine which restaurant in Atlanta is the oldest, and how to contact that restaurant. Moreover, we might have to engage in the actual activity of contacting that restaurant, speaking to an employee, and so on... *ad indefinitum*.<sup>23</sup> Toward that end, Chignell and Pasternack are also correct that, in this example of doctrinal believing, we are seemingly unable to engage in any activity that would allow us to secure theoretically sufficient grounds for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist.

However, insofar as Kant says we might only be able to “conceive and imagine an undertaking for which we would suppose ourselves to have sufficient grounds if there were a means for arriving at certainty about the matter” (A825/B853), my explanation of the Canon’s Stipulation shows that, by imagining and conceiving of such an undertaking, that undertaking is likewise an object of doctrinal believing. For example, we can conceive and imagine a technology that might allow us to engage in faster-than-light interstellar travel, which might allow us to determine whether or not extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. But yet again, we seemingly do not know how to engage in an activity that would bring such advanced technology into

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<sup>23</sup> My only point with this example is to show how activities can become necessary to secure grounds that are theoretically sufficient for knowing, e.g., the name of the general manager at Atlanta’s oldest restaurant. I am not suggesting anything about this example involves doctrinally believing. As my paper explains, the reason this example would not involve doctrinally believing is due to the apparent ease with which someone could point out and engage in activities that are likely to secure grounds theoretically sufficient for knowing the name of this general manager. By contrast, instances of doctrinal believing are typified by the fact that the means for such activities are seemingly non-existent, i.e., either we do not know how to engage in such an activity, or we are not in a position to know whether a given activity is a means for securing grounds theoretically sufficient for knowing, e.g., whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist.

existence – which is not to say that we are not currently engaging in an activity that would eventually make faster-than-light interstellar travel possible. Indeed, we can conceive and imagine how, e.g., our current efforts to develop quantum computing and artificial intelligence might one day allow us to develop that technology.<sup>24</sup> The point about doctrinally believing still stands: we cannot know that such an activity (e.g., quantum computing research) is means for making faster-than-light interstellar travel a reality.

In short, a candidate for doctrinal believing is any object to which we are seemingly unable to comport ourselves by means of an activity that would allow us to secure grounds that are theoretically sufficient for knowing (rather than merely believing) whether a proposition about that object is true. But as my previous example about quantum computing research points out, just because we have yet to secure grounds that are theoretically sufficient for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, that does not necessarily mean we have not already been engaged in an activity that will allow us to secure those grounds. For example, it is quite conceivable that we currently are engaged in an activity that will allow us to determine whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist (e.g., one of the various projects that comprise Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, or SETI), and this activity has merely yet to confirm the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms. The main point being, however, that we cannot know whether a current

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<sup>24</sup> One might object that the example explicitly involves believing in the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms, rather than believing (i.e., imagining and conceiving) that a particular undertaking is a means for determining whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. But as my explanation of the Canon's Stipulation shows, an assent occurs in a practical relation upon taking to be true "something" that the subject regards as a sufficient condition for satisfying a goal or purpose that the subject adopts. Within this framework, believing "extraterrestrial lifeforms exist" is equivalent to regarding their existence as a sufficient condition for satisfying and achieving a goal. This way of fitting the example into my framework of taking something to be true in a practical relation is not at all incoherent: just as we can only conceive and imagine the sort of activity that would allow us to know whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, we can only conceive and imagine what sort of possibilities would be made available to humans if we were to confirm that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, insofar as their existence might be a sufficient condition for making those possibilities into a reality. But in that case, the question becomes how their mere existence qualifies as an activity that would make actual and realize such a possibilities.

activity will allow us to know whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist – we cannot know as much until we know whether or not extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. In this respect, an actual activity *qua* “a means for knowing about something hitherto unknowable” likewise qualifies as an example of doctrinal believing. Indeed, the same grounds that would epistemically warrant a claim about knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist are necessary in order to warrant any claim to know whether any of the projects comprising SETI are a means for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist.

As my explanation of the Canon’s Stipulation will confirm, the Canon’s example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in a practical relation only insofar as we are unable to determine whether it occurs in a practical relation *qua* an instance of doctrinal believing. On the contrary, upon knowing whether an example of doctrinal believing occurs in a practical relation, we would know that it has satisfied and realized its goal of securing grounds that are theoretically sufficient for knowing, e.g., whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. In short, by knowing whether an example of doctrinal believing occurs in a practical relation, it would cease to be an example of believing and would become an instance of knowing. As a result, Chignell and Pasternack are not in an epistemic position to know whether or not the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in a practical relation – unless they know whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, and moreover know how to know as much.

### **3 BELIEVING *QUA* THEORETICALLY INSUFFICIENT ASSENT**

#### **3.1 Must Instances of Believing Occur in a Practical Relation?**

Both Andrew Chignell and Lawrence Pasternack claim the example of doctrinally believing “there are inhabitants of at least some of the planets that we see” (A825/B853) does not

occur in a practical relation. My purpose in this paper is to provide an explanation of the Canon's Stipulation that shows how all the Canon's examples of believing similarly occur in a practical relation. However, insofar as my purpose is to support my argument by showing how all the Canon's examples of believing adhere to my explanation of what it means for assent to occur in a practical relation, this assumes each of the Canon's examples of believing are supposed to occur in a practical relation.

Nothing from Kant's discussion in the Canon explicitly says any of his examples of believing is supposed to occur in a practical relation. The Canon's Stipulation does not require that all instances of believing occur in a practical relation; it requires only that theoretically insufficient assents occur in a practical relation in order to qualify as instances of believing. Indeed, nothing in the Canon explicitly precludes an instance of believing from being a theoretically sufficient assent, and the Canon's Stipulation would not require a theoretically sufficient assent occur in a practical relation in order to qualify as believing. The only reason the Canon gives us for thinking an instance of believing occurs in a practical relation is the Canon's Stipulation itself: only if an instance of believing is a theoretically insufficient assent should we expect that it occurs in a practical relation.

### **3.2 The Theoretical Insufficiency of Assent**

My attempt to show how each of the Canon's examples of believing occurs in a practical relation makes sense only if we should expect each to occur in a practical relation in the first place, and the only reason the Canon gives us for thinking each example of believing occurs in a practical relation is if each is a theoretically insufficient assent. Interestingly, however, nowhere in the Canon does Kant ever explicitly say any of the Canon's examples of believing is a theoretically sufficient assent. Rather, the Canon gives us only indirect textual support for

concluding any of its examples of believing are theoretically insufficient assents: an assent is theoretically insufficient only if it involves not knowing that which is taken to be true, or else the assent lacks certainty about that which is taken to be true.

In the Canon's example of pragmatic believing, Kant tells us the physician "does not know the illness" he eventually believes to be typhoid (A824/B852). In the example of doctrinal believing God exists, Kant says our "theoretical knowledge of the world" does not justify rendering this assent (A826/B854). Finally, in the example of morally believing that God and an Afterlife exist, Kant says, "no one will be able to boast that he **knows** that there is a God and a future life" (A828-9/B856-7). Several commentaries agree we may conclude each of these examples of believing is a theoretically insufficient assent in light of the fact that each involves not knowing that which is taken to be true.

Hence, if an assent involves not knowing that which is taken to be true, then the assent is theoretically insufficient and, conversely, if an assent is theoretically sufficient, then the assent is an instance of knowing. Provisionally, it seems Kant has already hinted at this correlation between theoretical [in]sufficiency and knowing when he says only instances of knowing are objectively sufficient, in contrast to the way instances of opining and believing are both held to be objectively insufficient (cf. A822/B850). Indeed, most commentaries would agree opening and believing are held to be objectively insufficient with regard to theoretically sufficient grounds that account for the way knowing is objectively sufficient.

However, in the example of doctrinal believing "there are also inhabitants of other worlds" (A825/B853), Kant never says we do not know whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. Rather, he says only that we do not "have sufficient grounds [for...] arriving at certainty about the matter" (A825/B853). Presumably, I cannot have certainty about the matter unless the grounds of

my assent are theoretically sufficient, i.e., the certainty with which something is taken to be true is a consequence of having grounds that render an assent theoretically sufficient. Additional confirmation of this construction comes by way of its correlation with the provisional suggestion that theoretical sufficiency of an assent correspond to the way believing is held to be objectively insufficient and knowing is objectively sufficient: immediately after Kant distinguishes believing and knowing in terms of their objective [in]sufficiency, he says “objective sufficiency [is called] **certainty** (for everyone)” (A822/B850).

On the one hand, it may seem that I am articulating an *ad hoc* and circumstantial correlation among the Canon’s notions of objective sufficiency, theoretical sufficiency, knowing, and certainty. But my main concern here is to show that, unless the proposed correspondence among this terminology is correct, the Canon offers no textual basis for concluding any of its examples of believing is a theoretically insufficient assent which, in turn, means we have no reason to think any of its examples occurs in a practical relation. However, and for reasons that will become clear, this proposed terminological correspondence is pivotal for seeing how doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in a practical relation – despite Chignell’s and Pasternack’s claims to the contrary. Hence, the same terminological correspondence that requires each the Canon’s examples of believing to occur in a practical relation ultimately allows us to see how all these examples occur in a practical relation. This alone ought to be seen as giving additional support to the veracity of this terminological correspondence.

## 4 THE PRACTICAL RELATION IN WHICH AN ASSENT OCCURS

### 4.1 A Relation between Practical Cognition and Practically Cognized Objects

In order to decipher what it means for an assent to occur in a practical relation, it is worth considering the context of Canon's Stipulation within the chapter Kant calls "The Canon of Pure Reason" (A795-831/B823-859). In his introductory remarks to the chapter, Kant defines a "canon" as "the sum total of the *a priori* principles of the correct use of certain cognitive faculties in general" (A796/B824). For the purposes of my paper, what Kant means by "a priori principles" is less important than what he regards as "the correct use" of pure reason *qua* a cognitive faculty. According to Kant, the correct use of pure reason concerns "not the speculative use but rather the **practical use of reason**" (A797/B825). Hence, insofar as there is a "*canon* of pure reason," Kant argues that these *a priori* principles concern only pure reason's capacity for practical cognition.

Much as the Canon of Pure Reason focuses on pure reason's capacity for practical cognition, I argue that the "practical relation" [*praktischer Beziehung*] to which the Canon's Stipulation refers is merely a description of practical cognition itself. Support for this reading begins with a few early remarks Kant makes in the Preface to the second edition *Critique of Pure Reason*:

Insofar as there is to be reason in these sciences, something in them must be cognized *a priori*, and this cognition can relate [*kann bezogen werden*] to its object in either of two ways, either merely **determining** [*bestimmen*] the object and its concept (which must be given from elsewhere), or else also **making** the object **actual** [*wirklich zu machen*]. The former is **theoretical**, the latter **practical** cognition of reason. (Bix-Bx)

In this passage, Kant says that the faculty of reason cognizes an object in either one of two ways, and that we may differentiate these two forms of cognition solely in terms of the unique way each "relates" to the cognized object. Accordingly, practical cognition of an object relates to its

object by “making actual” (or “realizing”) that object. Preliminarily, I want to suggest we may grasp the practical cognition of an object solely in terms of this relation of making actual and realizing the object being cognized, just as a practically cognized object may be grasped solely in terms of the fact that it something which is made actual and realized.

In the Canon of Pure Reason, Kant’s concern is pure reason’s capacity for practical cognition, and we may grasp practical cognition solely in terms of how it relates to its object, i.e., by making the object actual. I am arguing that the Canon’s Stipulation refers to the latter when Kant says, “[only] in a **practical relation** [...] can taking something that is theoretically insufficient to be true be called believing” (A823/B851). In other words, the practical relation to which Kant refers is none other than the way practical cognition relates to its object by making an object actual. If this is correct, then the Canon’s Stipulation merely says that a theoretically insufficient assent does not qualify as believing unless the assent occurs while practically cognizing an object. I will support this interpretation in two steps. First, I will refer to a few passages in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that show this portrayal of “making actual” an object is central to the Kantian notion of practical cognition. These same passages moreover explain what Kant means by “making actual” (or “realizing”) a practically cognized object. Secondly, the Canon provides examples for three different species of believing: pragmatic, doctrinal, and moral believing. Insofar as each of these examples is a theoretically insufficient assent, the Canon’s Stipulation requires that each also occurs in a practical relation. Hence, I support my interpretation of this practical relation by showing how each example involves making actual and realizing an object.

#### 4.2 Making Actual an Object as the Result of a Cognizing Subject's Activity

Regarding the first point just mentioned, there are a few passages from the *Critique of Practical Reason* where Kant uses the same locution of “*wirklich zu machen*” to explain practical cognition and practically cognized objects: Kant differentiates practical from theoretical reason in terms of the former's sole concern with “its own ability to make [objects] real [*wirklich zu machen*]” (5:89). Moreover, he says that “to be an object of practical cognition so understood signifies [...] only the **relation** of the will to the action [*die Beziehung des Willens auf die Handlung*] by which [the object] or its opposite would be made real [*wirklich gemacht würde*]...” (5:57, bold emphasis mine). This description of a *Beziehung* applies even to what Kant regards as the “*necessary object of practical reason,*” i.e., the Highest Good (5:135), which Kant says is “practical for us” for no other reason than that the Highest Good is supposed to be “made real through our will [...*für uns praktischen, d.i. durch unsern Willen wirklich zu machenden*]” (5:113).

These passages from the *Critique of Practical Reason* confirm a few things. Most importantly, the portrayal of a relation in which practical cognition makes actual and realizes the cognized object recurs throughout Kant's thought on practical cognition and practically cognized objects. Moreover, these passages confirm that practically cognizing an object is seemingly equivalent to making actual and realizing that object. Hence, and insofar as the Canon of Pure Reason focuses on pure reason's practical cognition of objects, Kant would agree that its theme is a relation whereby pure reason realizes and makes actual objects thus cognized. Finally, these passages confirm that we may grasp this relation as obtaining between the will and an action that

makes actual and realizes the object.<sup>25</sup> Hence, the example of the Highest Good qualifies as an object of practical cognition because it is supposed to be made real as the result of a relation between one's will and the actions (e.g., moral behavior) that would realize this object.

Given the significance of what Kant says is a relation whereby practical cognition makes actual a practically cognized object, it remains to be seen whether this is the same practical relation to which the Canon's Stipulation refers. The remainder of my analysis will focus on showing that, according to Kant's discussion in the Canon, it follows that the Canon's Stipulation is referring to the practical relation I have just articulated in terms of practically cognizing an object. As I have already mentioned, the Canon provides examples of what Kant says are three different types of believing: pragmatic, doctrinal, and moral believing. Insofar as each of these examples is supposed to be a theoretically insufficient assent, the Canon's Stipulation requires that each example occurs in a practical relation in order to be called an instance of believing. If my explanation of this practical relation is correct, then we may paraphrase the Canon's Stipulation and say each of the Canon's examples of believing involves making actual and realizing an object as the result of an activity in which a subject engages. Therefore, we can confirm my explanation of the practical relation to which the Canon's Stipulation refers by showing how each of the Canon's examples of believing involves a subject engaging in an activity that results in making actual and realizing an object.

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<sup>25</sup> As Federica Basaglia argues, whether or not something is "an object of practical reason hinges on the relation of the will to the action by which the object or its opposite would be realized: the action is the means by which the purpose can be produced" (See "The Highest Good," 23f.).

## 5 HOW AN ASSENT OCCURS IN A PRACTICAL RELATION

### 5.1 The Assent Refers to a Subject's Aim or Goal

Immediately after the Canon's Stipulation, Kant lays out two features constitutive of any assent that occurs in a practical relation. First, the Canon points out that one's practical relation has an "aim" [*Absicht*] or "end" [*Zweck*, also "goal" or "purpose"] with regard to which something is taken to be true. The Canon distinguishes between two types of aims and ends, and the basis of this distinction concerns only the "necessity" of the aim or end. According to Kant, either one's aim is "arbitrary and contingent" [*beliebigen und zufälligen*] and concerns matters of skill [*Geschicklichkeit*], or else one's purpose is "absolutely necessary" [*schlechthin notwendig*] and concerns matters of morality [*Sittlichkeit*] (A823/B851).

One way to make sense of this distinction between aims of skill or moral ends comes from the First Book of the Transcendental Dialectic, where Kant says only something "whose opposite is internally impossible, that whose opposite is clearly also impossible in all respects, is therefore itself absolutely necessary [*absolut notwendig*]" (A325/B381-2). In the Canon's example of a pragmatic belief, for example, a physician does not know but only believes his patient suffers from typhoid, and the purpose of his diagnosis is to provide treatment for the patient (A824/B852). We can deduce that the physician's goal is an arbitrary and contingent aim of skill since its opposite (e.g., a failure to provide treatment) is not impossible, i.e., this goal not absolutely necessary and therefore is not a moral end. Likewise, the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms has for its aim the securing of grounds that epistemically warrant our claim to know something hitherto unknowable, e.g., whether or extraterrestrials exist, or whether a given activity is means for determining their existence. Such an aim is obviously not absolutely necessary, since its opposite is clearly not impossible, insofar as we

seemingly lack such epistemic grounds. Indeed, only the Canon's example of moral believing involves an absolutely necessary end of morality, much as Kant says, "it is absolutely necessary [*schlechterdings notwendig*] that something must happen, namely, that I fulfill the moral law in all points" (A828/857).

## 5.2 "A Necessary Condition for Satisfying One's Goal" is Taken to Be True

In addition to the aim or goal regarding which something is taken to be true, the Canon provides another feature constitutive of any assent that occurs in a practical relation: a condition that is sufficient for achieving or satisfying the aim or goal of one's practical relation. And just as Kant distinguishes the aims and goals of practical relation in terms of their necessity, he distinguishes between two types of necessary conditions for satisfying the goal of one's practical relation, and the basis of this distinction concerns the necessity of the condition as well:

This necessity is subjectively but still only *comparatively sufficient* if I do not know [*weiß*] of any other conditions at all under which the end [*Zweck*] could be attained; but it is *sufficient absolutely* and for everyone if I know [*weiß*] with certainty [*gewiß*] that no one else can know [*kennen*] of any other conditions that lead to the proposed end [*Zweck*]. In the first case my presupposition and taking certain [*gewisser*] conditions to be true is a merely contingent belief, in the second case, however, it is a necessary belief. (A823-4/B851-2, italics mine)

Each of the Canon's examples of believing confirms that that which is taken to be true in a practical relation is none other than the sufficient condition for satisfying or achieving the purpose of one's practical relation. In other words, that which is taken to be true in a practical relation is either comparatively sufficient or absolutely sufficient for satisfying either an arbitrary and contingent or else an absolutely necessary aim, such that either "I do not know..." or else "I know with certainty that no one else can know..." of any other conditions that satisfy the aim and goal of my practical relation.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> A complete account of what it means for a sufficient condition to be either comparatively and absolutely sufficient seemingly requires a full explanation of *knowing* [*wissen*] (i.e., either "I do not know..." or else "I know that no one

A key difference between Kant's notions of comparatively and absolutely sufficient can be gleaned from his definition of "contingent beliefs" and "necessary beliefs" as those which assent to comparatively and absolutely sufficient conditions, respectively (A824/B852).<sup>27</sup> The notion that a comparatively sufficient condition is the object of a contingent belief suggests that, while I do not know of other condition than that which I am currently taking to be true, an alternative condition is presumably knowable. This account follows from Kant's example of pragmatic believing, which involves a doctor who merely believes his patient is suffering from typhoid, but freely admits someone else might do better at developing a diagnosis (A824/B852). In that case, the doctor's belief is contingent on the fact no one else knows what the illness. Were that to change, the doctor would cease believing his diagnosis is correct. By contrast, in the Canon's examples of doctrinal believing and moral believing, someone else might propose an alternative to the condition that is absolutely sufficient for achieving the believing subject's aim. But for reasons I explain, the aims of doctrinal and moral believing are always such that any

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else can know...,” A823-4/B851-2), which we have already seen Kant define as an assent that is both subjectively and objectively sufficient (A822/B850). Although it is beyond the scope of my paper to fully explain what subjective sufficiency and objective sufficiency mean for Kant, my paper nevertheless shows how all the Canon's examples of believing occurs in a practical relation (i.e., by virtue taking to be true something that the subject regards as either comparatively or absolutely sufficient for achieving her aim), thereby revealing additional nuances that any explanation of subjective and objective sufficiency should accommodate in order to differentiate and explain believing and knowing. In other words, an explanation of this terminology cannot merely stop at an account of why it is that an instance of believing fails to qualify as an instance of knowing, but moreover needs to accommodate an explanation of why it is that the believing subject does not know *any condition other than* that which she believes. Hence, an explanation of subjective and objective sufficiency needs to explain how and why it is that, in the case of a comparatively sufficient condition, I take that condition to be true in such a way that I do not know (in a manner that is both subjectively and objectively sufficient) that any other condition is sufficient to achieve my goal. Likewise, the same explanation of subjective and objective sufficiency must explain how and why it is that an absolutely sufficient condition is taken to be true such a way I know (in a manner that is both subjectively and objectively sufficient) that no one else can know (in a manner that is both subjectively and objectively sufficient) that any other condition is sufficient to achieve my purpose.

<sup>27</sup> As the Canon's examples of doctrinal believing confirm, a belief is "contingent" [*zufälligen*] by virtue of taking to be true a comparatively sufficient condition, which is independent of whether the goal of one's belief is "arbitrary and contingent" [*beliebigen und zufälligen*]. Both examples of doctrinal believing have arbitrary and contingent goals of skill, but nevertheless involve taking to be true something the subject regards as a condition that is "sufficient absolutely and for everyone," which means each example of doctrinally believing qualify as a "necessary belief" (A824/B852).

condition that satisfies that aim is unknowable, at least in the sense that any such condition will correspond to an object that we cannot encounter in an experience. Since any proposed condition for satisfying the aims of doctrinal and moral believing will correspond to objects that are unknowable, the believing subject can say “I know that no one else can know of any other conditions that lead to the proposed end” of either doctrinal or moral believing (A824/B852).

### 5.3 Making Actual and Realizing the Aim or Goal as the Result of an Activity

Now that I have articulated all the features Kant uses to describe an assent that occurs in a practical relation, we are ready to return to my previous claim that the practical relation to which Kant refers in the Canon’s Stipulation consists in making actual and realizing an object as the result of an activity in which someone engages. We are now in a position to see that the object that is made actual and realized as the result of an activity is none other than the aforesaid aim or goal for which something is taken to be true. Indeed, as each of the Canon’s examples of believing confirms, Kant’s notion of taking something to be true in a practical relation means taking to be true “something” that one regards as either comparatively sufficient or else absolutely sufficient for satisfying either an aim of skill or else an aim of morality, all while making actual this aim or end as the result of an activity in which one engages.<sup>28</sup> I will now confirm this rubric in the examples of pragmatic believing (A824/B852), morally believing that God and an Afterlife exist (A828-31/B856-59), and doctrinally believing that God exists. My purpose in this analysis is not to evaluate these examples of believing, but merely to show that these examples conform to my account of what Kant means by taking something to be true in a practical relation.

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<sup>28</sup> Hence, my account of the Canon’s Stipulation and what it means for an assent to occur in a practical relation lends support to Federica Basaglia’s claims that “the object of practical reason is to be understood as the possible purpose [i.e., *Zweck*] of an action [...] that something’s being an object of practical reason hinges on the relation of the will to the action by which the object or its opposite would be realized: the action is the means by which the purpose can be produced” (“The Highest Good,” 23).

## 5.4 How Each of the Canon's Examples of Believing Occurs in a Practical Relation

### 5.4.1 *Pragmatic Believing, Moral Believing, and Doctrinally Believing that God*

#### *Exists*

In the example of pragmatic believing (A824/B852), a physician admits he does not know his patient's illness upon inspecting her symptoms. However, because the physician "must do something" (i.e., treat the patient), his diagnosis that the illness is typhoid is "comparatively sufficient" for achieving his "arbitrary and contingent" aim of skill (treating the patient). Kant says this is an example of a "contingent belief," so we can be sure the doctor's diagnosis is "comparatively sufficient," which is why Kant says the physician would admit "someone else might do better" at developing a diagnosis – i.e., the doctor does not claim to "know that no one else can know of any other conditions that lead to the proposed end" of treating his sick patient (A824/B852). Finally, Kant says the doctor's contingent belief serves as the ground for "actual use of the means to certain actions," i.e., the actions in which the doctor engages in order to make actual and realize his goal of treating his patient.

In the example of moral believing, Kant says, "it is absolutely necessary that something happen, namely, that I fulfill the moral law in all points" (A828/B856), which would result from engaging in behavior motivated by nothing other than the morality of that behavior. Kant says we "can know with complete certainty that no one else knows of any other conditions that lead to this same unity of ends under the moral law" (A828/B856). Hence, upon morally believing that God and an Afterlife exist, Kant says the subject takes to be true something she regards as sufficient absolutely for achieving an absolutely necessary end of morality. To clarify Kant's claim in this example of moral believing, elsewhere he argues our ability to engage in behavior we regard as moral behavior must coincide with one's hope that such behavior will result in

happiness that is perfectly proportionate to one's worthiness of being happy. As Kant goes on to argue, the possibility of such happiness requires the existence of a God who can bring about such happiness in a future world (A810/B838). Without this hope, Kant argues, "the majestic ideas of morality would be objects merely of approbation and admiration but not incentives for resolve and realization [*Ausübung*]" (A812-3/B840-1). And insofar as the ideas of morality would cease to be objects of incentives for resolves and realization, we would be unable to engage in moral behavior.

In the example of doctrinally believing that God exists, Kant says the "presupposition of a wise author of the world is a *condition* of an *aim* which is, to be sure, *contingent* but yet not inconsiderable, namely that of having a guide for the investigation of nature" (A826/B854, my italics). Hence, Kant regards our having a guide for the investigation of nature as an aim of skill. Although nothing in our "theoretical knowledge of the world" supports this claim (A826/B854), Kant says the assent qualifies as a "belief" because of "the subjective influence on *the advancement of my actions reason* that hold me fast to" this idea (A827/B855, my italics). Hence, an assent that a wise author of nature exists proclaims the existence of a supposedly necessary condition for satisfying one's aim of investigating nature, much as this investigation is supposedly realized and made actual by the actions of pure reason that supposedly result from this assent.

I agree with Pasternack's assessment that this example of doctrinal believing harkens to Kant's discussion in the Appendix to the Transcendental Dialectic.<sup>29</sup> In the Appendix, Kant argues that each of pure reason's ideas functions as a *focus imaginarius*, i.e., an object towards which the activity of reason naturally devotes its activity in an effort to systematize the

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<sup>29</sup> Pasternack devotes an entire chapter to the Canon's example of doctrinally believing that God exists in "Kant's Doctrinal Belief in God" in *Rethinking Kant* Vol 2.

cognitions provided by understanding (A644/B672). By *focus imaginarius*, Kant means an object that “lies entirely outside the bounds of possible experience” and unknowable (A644/B672, cf. A695-8/B723-6). Therefore, if only an object corresponding to a *focus imaginarius* (e.g., a wise author of nature) is sufficient for achieving the aim in this example of doctrinal believing, then such an object must be unknowable. And because such an object must be unknowable, “I can know with certainty that no one else can know of any other conditions that lead to the proposed end” in this example of doctrinal believing (A823-4/B851-2). In other words, the sufficient condition taken to be true in this example is sufficient absolutely and for everyone: no one else can know of any other condition that would satisfy this aim because the only thing that can serve as such a condition is an unknowable object.

#### ***5.4.2 Doctrinally Believing that Extraterrestrial Lifeforms Exist***

Each of the Canon’s examples of believing so far confirms my explanation of taking something to be true in a practical relation: each involves taking to be true “something” that the believing subject regards as a sufficient condition for satisfying and achieving the aim or end of a practical relation, all while making actual and realizing that aim as the result of an activity in which the believing subject engages. Having so far confirmed the accuracy of this framework for explaining what Kant means by “taking something to be true in a practical relation,” we are now in a position to show how the example of doctrinal believing extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in practical relation accordingly. To facilitate my explanation of this example, I will cite Kant’s discussion of it in its entirety:

Since, however, even though we might not be able to undertake anything in relation [*Beziehung*] to an object, and taking something to be true is therefore merely theoretical, in many cases we can still conceive and imagine an undertaking for which we would suppose ourselves to have sufficient grounds if there were a means for arriving at certainty about the matter; thus there is in merely theoretical judgments an **analogue** of practical judgments, where taking them to be true is aptly

described by the word **believing**, and which we can call **doctrinal believing**. If it were possible to settle by any sort of experience whether there are inhabitants of at least some of the planets that we see, I might well bet everything that I have on it. Hence I say that it is not merely an opinion but a strong belief (on the correctness of which I would wager many advantages in life) that there are also inhabitants of other worlds. (A825/B853)

Notice that it is the apparent inability to “undertake anything in relation” to an object of doctrinal believing that implicates the assent’s theoretical insufficiency that is thereby taken to be true. At the very least, the theoretical insufficiency of the assent indicates our apparent inability to engage in an activity that would secure theoretically sufficient grounds for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. In terms of my explanation of what Kant means by “taking something to be true in a practical relation,” we would say engaging in such an activity makes actual and realizes *knowledge* about “whether there are inhabitants of at least some of the planets that we see” (A825/B853).

I will now argue that such knowledge is the object that is supposedly being made actual and realized in this example of doctrinal believing. But I will also show that just because this object has yet to be made actual and realized, this does not mean we have not been and are not currently engaging in the activity that would make actual and realize knowledge about whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. Instead, one of the critical points in this example of doctrinal believing seems to be that no one can know whether or not we have been and are currently engaged in such an activity until we know whether or not extraterrestrial lifeforms exist.

On my account of taking something to be true in a practical relation, the object being made actual and realized as the result of an activity is none other than the aim or end of the practical relation for which something is taken to be true. In order to confirm that this example of doctrinal believing is supposed to be making actual and realizing knowledge of extraterrestrial lifeforms, we may begin by showing that such knowledge is the aim of this practical relation. In

that case, my account of taking something to be true in a practical relation requires that that which is taken to be true in a practical relation is something one regards as a condition that is sufficient for satisfying and achieving one's aim. Hence, we can confirm that knowledge of extraterrestrial lifeforms is the aim in this example of doctrinal believing by showing that this example involves taking to be true something that one regards as a sufficient condition for satisfying and achieving such an aim.

With these considerations in mind, the following excerpt confirms that this example of doctrinal believing is an instance of taking to be true something that one regards as a sufficient condition achieving knowledge about the otherwise unknowable existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms:

[We] can still *conceive* [*Gedanken fassen*] and *imagine* [*einbilden*] an *undertaking* [*Unternehmung*] for which we would *suppose* [*vermeinen*] ourselves to have sufficient grounds [*hinreichende Gründe*] if there were a means [*Mittel*] for arriving at certainty [*Gewißheit*] about the matter. (A825/B853, italics mine)

By conceiving and imagining that a given activity would allow us “to settle by any sort of experience whether there are inhabitants of at least some of the planets that we see”

(A825/B853), Kant is saying we are nevertheless taking it to be true that such an undertaking is a sufficient condition for knowing something that would be hitherto unknowable. Similarly, and just as “we would suppose ourselves to have sufficient grounds” for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist “if it were possible to settle by any sort of experience” whether or not they do exist, much as we can only conceive and imagine what that “sort of experience” would be, we nevertheless regard such an experience as “a means for arriving at certainty about the matter” (A825/B853).

As I pointed out earlier, an aim is “absolutely necessary” only if its opposite is impossible in all respects. Having so far demonstrated that the aim in this example of doctrinal believing is

knowledge of whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, this would be an absolutely necessary aim only if it were impossible to know whether they exist. Clearly, we do not know whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, and this confirms that knowledge of extraterrestrial lifeforms is not “absolutely necessary” but an arbitrary and contingent aim of skill. Indeed, this aim of doctrinal believing has yet to be made actual and realized as the result of an activity.

However, the fact that we have yet to make actual and realize our knowledge about whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist does not necessarily entail the nonexistence of the activity that will make actual and realize such knowledge. It might be that humans already have been and currently are engaging in such an activity. It is simply the case that that activity has yet to make actual and realize our knowledge of whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. The first indication that Kant would have us grasp this example of doctrinal believing accordingly is a peculiar feature that distinguishes it from the Canon’s other examples of believing. In each of the Canon’s other examples of believing, that which is taken to be true and regarded as a sufficient condition for achieving one’s aim differs from the activity that is responsible for making actual and realizing that aim or end. In the example of doctrinal believing, however, that which is taken to be true and regarded as a sufficient condition for satisfying one’s aim is identical to the very activity that is supposed to make actual and realize one’s aim.

Since the aim in this example of doctrinal believing is to have sufficient grounds [for] arriving at certainty about the matter, the fact that this example is taking to be true the very means for arriving at certainty about the matter has important implications regarding the epistemic status of any activity that purports to make actual and realize these sufficient grounds. These implications explain why such activity appears to be as nonexistent as extraterrestrial lifeforms. We need only see why it is Kant would say any proposed activity for realizing

knowledge about whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist is “absolutely sufficient” for satisfying this aim, i.e., “I can know with certainty that no one else can know of any other... means for arriving at certainty about the matter” (A824/B852, A825/B853). In other words, we need only see why no one is in any position to know whether or not a given activity or experience is “a means for arriving at certainty about” something as unknowable as extraterrestrial lifeforms (A825/B853), or whether or not such activities and experiences even exist.

As established at the outset of this discussion, Canon’s Stipulation suggests one of the critical differences between instances of knowing and believing is that only the former have their basis in grounds that are theoretically sufficient for knowing. Much as I have eschewed any attempt to identify such grounds or the standard they need to satisfy in order to qualify as theoretically sufficient, I need not define these terms in order to make the following point: whatever theoretically sufficient grounds would allow some to know whether an activity is a means for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist ought to be equally applicable for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. In other words, without knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, no one is in a position to know whether or not a given activity is a means for knowing whether or not extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. Indeed, our ability to know that an activity is a means for arriving at certainty about the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms presupposes that we know what would really constitute having “certainty about whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist” in the first place. Along these lines, I now want to return to Kant’s claim that an experience would be able to settle whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, and my suggestion that we can only conceive and imagine (i.e., form doctrinal beliefs about) what sort experiences would settle whether or not extraterrestrial lifeforms exist.

Although we can imagine and conceive an experience that might allow us to know whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, absent the actuality of that experience, we do not know if such an experience is one which really would afford us knowledge about whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. In other words, and assuming an experience of some sort is necessary in order to know whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, we do not know what the experience is that would afford us knowledge about whether extraterrestrial lifeform exist. Indeed, one reason we do not what that experience would be like is that we do not know how make that sort of experience into a reality, i.e., we are seemingly unable to engage in the activity that would make actual and realize an experience of extraterrestrial lifeforms.. As a result, and while we can very well posit (i.e., conceive, imagine, believe) what it is in which such an experience might consist, we have no way of knowing whether or not we are correct that that experience really would allow us to know whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. Toward that end, and insofar as we might very well know what sort of activities would bring about that experience – insofar as we do not know that that posited experience would afford us knowledge of whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, we cannot know that such activities really are means for arriving at certainty about whether or not extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. We might very well know that a particular activity is a means for securing a particular experience that might afford us knowledge of whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. But we do not know whether that particular experience is one that would afford us knowledge of extraterrestrial lifeforms.

Since any activity *qua* “a means for arriving at certainty about [e.g., whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist]” is unknowable, Kant would say, “I can know with certainty that no one else can know of any other conditions that lead to the proposed end” (A824-5/B852-3). Hence, the existence of such a means is itself unknowable. As a result, the example of

doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in a practical relation only insofar as no one can know whether or not it occurs in a practical relation, i.e., it occurs in a practical relation only insofar as no one can know whether or not humans already have been or else currently are engaging in an activity that will make actual or realize our knowledge of whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist. The only way anyone can know whether or not there is such an activity is by knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist in the first place. In that case, however, this example of doctrinal believing ceases to be an example of believing and instead becomes an instance of knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist.

I have just shown how Kant's example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in a practical relation in the same way that each of the Canon's other examples of believing has been shown to occur in a practical relation. Just like the Canon's other examples of believing, the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in a practical relation by taking to be true something that one regards as a necessary and sufficient condition for satisfying and achieving an aim or end, all while making actual and realizing one's aim or end as the result of an activity in which one engages. More specifically, the example of doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist occurs in a practical relation as follows: it involves taking it to be true that an activity is an absolutely sufficient condition for achieving the arbitrary and contingent aim of having knowledge about an object that is otherwise unknowable prior to engaging in that activity, all while making actual and realizing such knowledge as the result of an activity in which one engages.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The Canon describes doctrinally believing that extraterrestrial lifeforms exist as “an **analogue** of practical judgments” (A825/B853), which Lawrence Pasternack interprets to mean

that the example does not occur in a practical relation and is instead an exception to the Canon's Stipulation.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, our ability to explain what it means for this example to be an analogue of practical judgments seemingly presupposes an account of what practical judgments are in the first place, so as to explain what the features are in terms of which this example of doctrinal believing might not really a practical judgment, but nevertheless resembles one. My explanation of the Canon's Stipulation helps explain what those features are on the basis of which this example of doctrinal believing qualifies as an analogue of practical judgment.

Like all assents that occur in a practical relation, I have shown that doctrinal believing posits the veracity of that which the subject regards as a sufficient condition for achieving an aim or goal the subject adopts. Moreover, my explanation of the Canon's Stipulation requires that practical judgments exhibit the additional feature of the believing subject engaging in an activity in order to make actual and realize the goal for which the subject renders a practical judgment. Given this framework, it becomes clear that the goal of in the example of doctrinal believing is none other than to secure theoretically sufficient grounds for knowing something that remains unknowable until we engage in an activity that makes actual and realizes such grounds. Accordingly, we find that that which the doctrinally believing subject regards as a sufficient condition for satisfying and achieving this goal is none other than the very activity that would make actual and realize this goal.

My explanation of the Canon's Stipulation might help explain why Kant regards this example of doctrinal believing as an analogue of practical judgment, since I have shown why it is not possible for us to locate the activity that is necessary for this example of doctrinal believing to occur in a practical relation. Simply put, we can know that the example occurs in a

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<sup>30</sup> Pasternack, "Development and Scope," 300.

practical relation only if we secure grounds that are theoretically sufficient for knowing whether extraterrestrial lifeforms exist, but in which case the assent regarding the existence of extraterrestrial lifeforms would cease to qualify as an instance of believing and would instead be an example of knowing. Hence, so long as doctrinal believing is an example of believing, we can only believe that the example occurs in a practical relation, and we cannot know as much. I think this peculiar feature of the example offers a plausible explanation for why Kant regards it is an analogue of practical judgments. Simply put, the example possesses all the features of a practical judgment only if we are unable to determine whether it actually does or not.

In this respect, I think the example of doctrinal believing helps draw attention to a philosophically interesting way in which Kant seems to think knowledge and action are mutually supporting and dependent on each other. On the one hand, the example of doctrinal believing is concerned with securing grounds that are theoretically sufficient for taking to be true a judgment that falls short of our ability to know whether it is true, i.e., a shortfall due to our apparent inability to engage in an activity that would secure grounds theoretically sufficient for knowing. Here, we see activity operating in the service of knowledge. But at the same time, it equally remains unclear why it is that we are seemingly unable to engage in such behavior. It could be the case that we already have been and currently are engaging in such behavior, but that we cannot know as much until we secure the theoretically sufficient grounds for which we are supposedly engaging in that behavior. Or it could be the case that we have yet to develop the knowledge that necessary to engage in the activity that is necessary to secure theoretically sufficient grounds for knowing something else. In both these scenarios, we see that our ability to engage in behavior relies on our ability to know what it is that we are doing in the first place.

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